I: Good afternoon and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper.

I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection.

The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent within the protocols of the University that I'm serving my bachelor's theses. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk for you and you can leave it at any time.

I would like to ask for your consent to record this conversation, as this would make it easier for me to analyze the data later. I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R4: Yes.

This interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis paper.

Any questions before we start?

R4: Nope.

I: Okay, the first question is how would you personally define sustainability?

R4: Well, because I know there are multiple types of sustainability. I mean, there's economic and I think there's tons. And there's environmental sustainability, which is one that everyone usually thinks of when they think of sustainability. It mostly just applies to consuming things in a way that is not, in not better words, bad for the environment. So you try to have like a more, like the more neutral, the more better you are. Like if there are more better environmental benefits from doing something that makes it more sustainable. Or just active, like attempting not to have so many bad things is sustainability. But it's all about protecting the environment and including it in like your triple bottom line if you're in terms of businesses. So, yeah.

I: Perfect. And to what extent would you say you are concerned about environmental issues? And are you taking any action in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R4: I mean, I think I do what nearly everybody does. I mean, I think it's just more of an everyday thing of just not being totally terrible to the environment. I think it's just everyday taking conscious effort. So it's like, I mean, I don't unnecessarily waste water ever. I don't unnecessarily waste electricity. I think my carbon footprint is pretty small. So I'm only in my apartment for like, what, maybe two hours, three hours. So, I mean, I think I do just about what everybody does. I don't shop online very much. When I do, it's

mostly just during the holiday season, which I guess you could argue that it's not very [sustainable], because that's when the things are at their highest. And I don't really buy from fast fashion, not because I think it's bad, because I know a lot of people don't have choices. But mostly I just have a fear. I just feel like I need to try stuff on, because I'm worried when things are going to get here, they won't work. So I'd say pretty average. I mean, the only bad thing I think I don't do is I don't really recycle as much as I think. But that's also because I don't know how it works here. And it's pretty scary. And everything has different labels. So I'd say that's the only thing I'm quite ashamed of. But yeah, I just use glass instead of styrofoam. I try not to use single-use stuff. Because I don't know. I like to get the most use out of things. I like things to be durable and last for a long time. That's, yeah, I guess those are things.

I: Perfect. Third question, what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? Is there anything that you pay attention to?

R4: Like if it's on a list of things, where it's like, oh, this package is going to include blah, blah, blah. Would I not buy it? Because it has certain things? Honestly, no.

I: Or if there's a certain material you care about or anything like that. If there's one thing that you look at.

R4: I'm pretty anti-Styrofoam just because I know there's literally no way for that to be degradable. They've tried so much to get rid of it. But of course, for some things, electronics and stuff like that. And I bought, like when I was doing my internship in Florida, I bought a mini, like a micro-oven. And it came with Styrofoam. And I just feel like that's just something. Unless you could find something just as sturdy. It's just easier that you don't buy the micro oven at all. So when it comes to that, it's kind of hard because you don't really have a choice if you need something.

I: Perfect. What kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packaged goods that you have bought lately?

R4: Yeah, so when I was in my internship, we had completely redone the kitchen. So I didn't personally buy it, but we were redoing everything. So we were given fridges and micro ovens and microwaves and just basically utensils and plates and stuff. So there was tons of stuff. Most of everything came with cardboard packaging, which was really awesome. But of course, there were a few things that needed to be protected at all costs that came with Styrofoam. But everything else basically came with cardboard, which is pretty nice. I mean, it is cardboard, but it's like that paper thing where it's like mesh and it's supposed to mimic. You know what I'm talking about?

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And then on a weekly basis, if you're grocery shopping or clothing shopping, what are the kinds of things you buy? For example, if you go into a grocery store.

R4: Oh, yeah, I buy the same things every week. Mostly because I feel like it's easier for me if I don't like have… the less choices I have on what I eat, the better for me. So, I mean, I buy avocados every time I go to the grocery store. I buy eggs. I buy bread. I buy apples. Maybe like little biscuits or something. Be a pretty standard. I don't really. It's not that I don't like meat or don't buy it. I just by the time I get to want

to eat it, it's already expired. So I try not to eat it. Yeah. Oh, lots of protein drinks and just like frozen fruits and stuff. Yeah.

I: And among the products that you just mentioned, have you noticed if any of them were sustainable or had sustainable packaging?

R4: I mean, I guess I don't know if this counts, but the bread I buy is like oat based, which I guess that's kind of I don't know. But this is about packaging. That's more of the food. I think that, yeah, I mean, there's like the protein drinks I have, like, please, like, say, like, please recycle me on the bottom of them. I'd say like that kind of is. I mean, it's like, um, honestly, nothing really sticks out to me. I mean, beyond the drinks, because it's like "por favor reciclame", you know what I mean?

I: So how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? So what criteria would you use to determine if you look at a product, what would be the criteria used to decide if it's sustainable?

R4: How many times you can use it. So, you know, I've said things about like not using single use. So it's like, like, I try not to use paper towels that often. I love paper towels for things, but I try not to use them that much because it's like one and done. And I know it's not like a huge detrimental thing, but that's another thing I like that if it's a single use. So it's like how many times you can use it, like in terms of plastic and glass, like you will get so much more use out of glass than you ever will out of a plastic Tupperware or anything. I use like and like plates and stuff like, you know, I don't buy paper plates because it's only going to be one use. So that's how I determine just how many uses can you get out of it? Because the more times you can use something, the better excuse you can have, like clothing. Like I define clothing as being sustainable. Like how many times can you wear that? Is it only something that will last a season? Will it last in the last several seasons? It's something that can serve like cyclical things like that. And if it is gets into them more single use, it's like how well can it be degraded? Like how durable is it? So is it something that like, like cardboard is pretty biodegradable. Paper is pretty biodegradable. Um, styrofoam no, you know, so, and things that have wax on them actually aren't as, or it's also like, you can look at something. Um, this is where I learned when I was at Elon. Um, but for some things you can look at the bottom of a, like a cup or something, and it'll have a number. I know that's an American thing. Um, and I'm pretty sure it's only like certain numbers are actually recyclable. And I think it's, I can't remember what they are, but I was like, it was something like one and seven or something. Or like the only ones that can be recyclable. Everything else has to be trash. That's another thing. Um, I think that's all I can think of right now.

I: That's perfect. And the last question is what elements of a product make you think that it is eco-friendlier than other, regardless if you buy it or not. So if you see something in a store, even if you don't buy it, is there something like you see a certain color, you see a picture, you see a material that makes you think that it's sustainable.

R4: Oh yeah. I mean, especially when I was at Target a lot, like, cause I mean, it was like, it was a mega Target and I go grocery shopping there. 100% falling into like labels that are simpler and like better writing and everything on the ingredients might be super available. I'm going to think it's better than some bigger, flashier, big brand stuff. Like even if that, like, it's just the idea that it's like, oh, it's simpler, maybe

better ingredients or something. I'm going to think it's automatically, like Target falls into that all the time. They'll have like their specific line and it's, everything is like streamlined and simple and minimalistic. And I don't know, it gives me a vibe that it's like, oh, maybe it was made better with better ingredients or something. And it's not like I check. So I kind of just go based on that. And of course maybe like green things. I know that's a big problem, but honestly, I mean, we humans color associate with it. There's so much psychology. So it's like when you see something green, you're like, ah, better for the environment or something. You know, just like how blue is pleasing and stuff. I don't know.

I: Yeah, perfect. So I'm now going to show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods. Please classify each of them based on which you believe is the most sustainable. And I asked you to provide a brief explanation of why you feel this way about each series of products. So for each, if you could just say one, two, or three, and then why. So this is the first one.

R4: Probably the can. Just because I think like, I don't know, when I think of, I don't know, like any type of can thing, I know that it's like automatically very like recyclable. I think metal is also easier. Actually, it's not like, no idea. I'm not an expert. I think it's easier to recycle. That's why I would think.

I: Okay. This is the second one.

R4: That would probably be the glass. The glass. Easier to be recyclable. Yeah.

I: For this one?

R4: Probably the glass.

I: For the same reason? That it's recyclable.

R4: Yeah. Because I think it's, well, at least like my family too. Like we, anything that's like glass and especially like that, I mean, we have so many, it is like the mayo. Like I have so many empty mayo jars that have been cleaned out because we like to reuse them. Easily reusable and recyclable for glass.

I: Perfect. And then out of these three.

R4: Probably Chobani. And I only think that just because it's a pretty good company. They make good ingredients. So I want to think that they, I would trust them to do the right thing when it comes to ingredients. But like Yoplait, I think Yoplait's not like the best company. So I don't really know much about Noosa. I know it's a good yogurt, but don't know much about them.

I: Okay. For these three?

R4: Probably the Minute Maid.

I: Okay. Why?

R4: It's got more of that like non-GMO like, I can't remember what it says, but it's like 100% like, yeah, it's got some pulp in it. Like iit feels more natural. The orange is more realistic and not cartoony looking.

I: Perfect. Out of these three?

R4: Well, I only know that Land O'Lakes makes their butter. Like the container is cardboard. So that's the only reason why I would think it's like… I've had Kerrygold and stuff and I don't know how, but I do know cardboard is recyclable. So I'd say that.

I: Out of these three?

R4: I actually have that at home. But probably the strawberry, the middle one [Bonne Maman]. Because it's glass and I know that company and I don't personally know them, but they seem like a, like a smaller company. And I don't know, it's, I would trust smaller brands to do the right thing. Whereas like Smuckers, I don't know how great they recycle things. So I'd go with the smaller company.

I: Out of these three.

R4: Probably Triscuit only just because I think I could be wrong, but they're known for being the healthiest of the three. So I would trust like a company that is healthier, probably is more sustainable with the ingredients and everything that they choose.

I: Okay. Out of these.

R4: Oh, Dawn. Just because I, well, I think a lot of people buy their products and the products are made out of plastic, but there was a word for it. What they give to companies and it's like, oh, you may be giving bad things, but if you like donate to like, they give like bad emissions, but if you donate to something else, it's, I don't know if there's like a word for it. It's like, I don't know. It's not reparations or something, but it's, let's say you put it like a ton of CO2, but if you donate a ton of money to like a really good fund somewhere else that like will help balance you out. So I know they put a lot to like cleaning animals from like oil spills and stuff. So I feel like that kind of makes them more sustainable.

I: And then out of these three?

R4: Probably the glass one [On The Border].

I: Okay. Out of these three?

R4: Probably Quaker. But I'm debating because I know there's like, obviously it's got, it doesn't, it's not just cardboard. There's plastic on the inside so there's some debate of like, oh, is that more sustainable? But I think Honey Bunches of Oats, the, I don't know who the parent company is, but I think I'm going to go with the smaller company, which is Quaker. This is also like better ingredients and stuff.

I: Okay. So better ingredients and cardboard.

R4: Yeah.

I: And I think this is one of the last ones.

R4: I think it's, I probably would go with the last one [Volleman's]. Smaller company. So trust them better to be more transparent about the things that they use. I don't know. I would trust them to treat their cows, but I know FairLife got in like a, they're having some problems with the way they treat their cows. Don't know about Horizon Organic, but, and anything to do, I think, with like lactose-free milk requires some, I don't know. But I would trust the smaller company to do the better thing. And simple, minimalistic stuff like I was talking about. I fall for it every time.

I: Perfect.And this last one.

R4: Okay. I'd probably do the chameleon. It's cute.Very simple design with the logo and everything. And it's green, so it's like your eyes immediately go to it.

I: Perfect.

R4: So probably for those reasons.

I: And I just have one last follow-up question after looking at all of those pictures. Which is, did you perceive any kind of greenwashing from any of the brands we've reviewed today? In case you're not familiar with greenwashing, it's defined as intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a firm's environmental practices and impact.

R4: I think the chameleon, I think, I don't, I think, I can't remember if it was Minute Maid, was the orange juice. Those are probably the two ones that definitely caught out to me that definitely, oh, the Triscuit, which utilize a kind of, like, original, non-GMO. Like, those great, those, like, catchy words to, like, get you and me, like, entice you to think, like, oh, like, they're better for me. They have better ingredients. like, it's got non-GMOs. It's, like, all whole ingredients. 100% wheat. It's, it's, like, catchy words like that, which makes me think that it's probably going to be better for you. As far as chameleon, again, simple stuff, and it's green, and yeah, yeah.

I: Perfect. Okay, thank you so much for your help in my study.

R4: Yeah, of course.